

# PEABODY OPERA DEPARTMENT

## Handbook 2008–2009

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## 1. Our Location

**114 Leakin Hall.** The Opera Office and Opera Studio are located right next to each other; the Opera Board is right outside. All information pertinent to Opera Department functions will be posted in this area. In the Opera Office you may find the department's **Administrative Secretary**, Judy Diann Bennett, who should be your first resource for most business of the department. Her office hours will be posted; generally 10:00–4:00 Monday through Friday.

The Opera Studio is the main space used for rehearsals; get to know this area well. Due to the large number of productions being put on this season there will often be more than one rehearsal going at once, so look out for alternative sites.

As elsewhere in the neighborhood around Peabody, always be mindful of security issues. If you are rehearsing late at night, consider walking in groups, etc. Never let anyone you do not know or who does not have a Peabody ID follow you through the door. If you have any problems with anyone trying to gain unauthorized entry, contact security immediately at ext. 6000.

Our on-line location (website) is <http://peabodyopera.org>. Almost everything you need to know about the department can be found there. You can use the search box to find almost anything on the site. Special information of immediate importance is often highlighted in the box at the top right of the home page. Practical information for students is accessed via the “For current students” link in the menu box on the left of most of the principal pages. This page gives you access to the weekly schedules, to the various forms for on-line submission of information, the department handbook, and special news such as snow closings.

Please note that, although the two are linked, the Peabody Opera site is separate from the opera page on the main conservatory site, and contains more extensive information.

## 2. The Audition Process

Diagnostic auditions are required of everybody except Opera GPD majors who wish to participate in any aspect of the Opera

- failure to stay in town through the run of the production; and
- pulling out of a production once you have committed to it.

A word about the last of these. It is unprofessional and unfair to your colleagues to ask to be excused from a production once the rehearsal process has begun. The one obvious exception to this is in the case of health or vocal problems as documented by your physician or teacher. Very occasionally, there may be professional reasons why you should at least ask whether you might be excused from the production; the faculty will not think less of you for asking their opinion and advice. But to drop out without permission or for trivial reasons will seriously affect your image as a committed artist, and this in turn will be reflected in the opportunities that you are given and recommendations you receive.

Academically, early withdrawals will be treated as a “W” on your transcript. But, as with the published schedule for classes, each contract will stipulate a date (roughly equivalent to the start of staging) after which unexcused withdrawals may earn a grade of “F”.

## 12. One Final Word

Finally, a gentle reminder: if in doubt, refer to the golden rule! Your life at Peabody is the start of your career as an adult, musician, and professional. Your reputation for reliability, cooperation, and for being a team player that you establish now will continue to help or hinder you throughout your career. The music world is extremely small; people do talk! Make sure your reputation and recommendations remain faultless.

period. Upon receipt of the contract, please note any conflicts immediately, such as potential auditions (even if you have not formally been called), work conflicts, etc.

Please also remember that it is your responsibility to clear your schedule and make yourself completely available during rehearsals in the “red zone” period. Sometimes the schedule requires that some final rehearsals must overlap with classes and other rehearsals. Notices will be sent by the Academic Dean’s office to your academic professors with a request to excuse you. This excuse is at the discretion of the teachers, so please be respectful and speak with them personally as this is a professional courtesy and not a right. Any work missed during these absences is your responsibility to make up.

In productions that are double-cast, *all* cast members will be expected to *remain in town for the entire duration of the run*, through curtain time of the last performance, even if it is not your cast. Productions are double-cast in part so that if something were to happen to one cast member, their counterpart would be able to step in. If the counterpart is not in town, that defeats the purpose of the double-cast role.

When you sign your contract you commit yourself to provide continually up-to-date contact and schedule information, and to adhere to the scheduling procedures and deadlines as laid out in Sections 4 through 6 above. You accept the stipulation that not appearing at a rehearsal or coaching without appropriate prior notification will result in the lowering of your grade.

By signing the contract, you also commit yourself to adhere to the expectations on punctuality, musical and dramatic preparation, and rehearsal department listed in Sections 7 through 9 above.

Failure to live up to the commitments made when you sign a contract will affect your standing in the Department, and most cases will result in a lowering of your grade. Such situations include, but are not limited to:

- failure to appear at a rehearsal or coaching without appropriate prior notification;
- repeatedly coming to rehearsal late or under-prepared;
- lack of respect for your colleagues or teachers;

program (including classes). These will take place in the later afternoons and evenings of Tuesday through Thursday, September 2–4. Audition times will be assigned by the department, so that singers from one studio can sing together and be heard by their teacher; times will be posted on the Opera Board. Freshmen, however, will be heard together on Tuesday, September 2, since it is less likely that they will be considered for roles in major productions.

For more information about auditions, please visit the Opera website at <http://peabodyopera.org/info/welcome/>.

### 3. General Schedule Information

We have prescheduled all of the major rehearsal slots for all of the productions the Opera Department will put up this season. The entire cast will not be used for each rehearsal, but as the schedule is published the Thursday before the week to which it pertains, you will not know which rehearsals you are not required for until then. Thus, you should be fully aware of the specific time commitment required for a certain role before you accept it, and plan accordingly. Sheets detailing the specific rehearsal times for each show are available in the Opera Office; you will be required to countersign one of these sheets as a contract for your participation in the show.

Each show will have a typical rehearsal pattern as laid out in the advanced schedule and it is the singer’s responsibility upon acceptance of the role to keep these times free. A limited number of absences from the rehearsals listed in the advance schedule (up to four for an Opera Theatre production, or three for any other) may be granted during the initial musical and staging rehearsal period, but no conflicts will be allowed during the “red zone” of any show. However, there is no limit to the number of release requests that may be submitted which do not affect rehearsals listed on the advance schedule. Note that although properly-submitted requests for release will not be denied without good reason, they must be specifically approved by the Administrative Secretary.

The “red zone” is displayed in bold face on the advanced schedule and can be anywhere from three to fifteen days in length. In rare cases, students may be cast who already have

one or two conflicts during these periods. A compromise affecting the red zone may be worked out only if the situation is addressed before acceptance of the role.

#### 4. Submitting Your Personal Information

At the beginning of the year, it your responsibility to provide us with up-to-date contact information including a valid e-mail address and your weekly schedule. As this office is required to process and disseminate large amounts of information to a large number of people, our primary means of communication will be electronic. It is thus necessary for anyone wanting to participate in a production or class to have an e-mail address they are able to check at least once a day.

- To submit your contact information, access the “For Current Students” section of the Peabody Opera website. Simply click the “Submit contact information” link in the “Contact Us” section of that page and supply the information as prompted.
- To submit your biographical information (which is needed for the printed programs of our various productions), visit the “For Current Students” page at and click on “Submit biographical information.” Follow the instructions on the page. Biographical information is due no later than Friday, September 26th, 2006.
- To submit your regular weekly schedule, you must again access the “For Current Students” section of the Peabody Opera website. This time click the “Submit schedule or request releases” link. Follow the directions as given on the website and submit the form electronically once it is completed. You will receive a reply e-mail confirming that we have received your schedule.
- To make changes to your weekly schedule or to request one-time releases, simply return to the web site and follow the hyperlinks to the appropriate area. Once there, you will find instructions as to how you should proceed.

Should you wish to request a release, it is your responsibility to notify the Administrative Secretary via the on-line form (which is automatically time-stamped) **no later than noon on the Tuesday prior to the week to which the request applies**. So, for example, any requests for the schedule of the week of

Performance activities, such as productions of the Opera Theatre, Chamber Opera, and Opera Workshop, will be graded on the basis of 50% for rehearsal, as assessed by the faculty in charge of the production, and 50% for performance, as assessed by other faculty attending the performances. Possible reasons for lowering of the rehearsal portion of the grade include poor preparation for rehearsals, failure to adhere to published deadlines, repeated tardiness, or missed rehearsals (other than those excused through the regular procedures of the department). For students who do not meet the announced memorization deadline, the highest grade that can be earned is a B.

Classroom Activities will generally contain some performance elements which can be graded by visiting faculty. It is up to the individual teacher of each class to determine the number and nature of these informal performances and the proportion of the final grade (generally 25%–40%) which is represented by the jury grade. Each individual teacher is responsible for making clear the principles upon which his or her own grading is based.

#### 10. POCP Obligations and Open Masterclasses

There will be up to six POCP master classes (3 each semester) at a location and time to be announced. Students in POCP must sing at one of these classes in their semester of coaching, and attend all but one of them. The dates for these master classes will be posted on the Opera Board as soon as they are available.

Students not currently enrolled in POCP may sing at a master class on a space-available basis. Watch the Opera Board for the signup sheet as the class approaches. Please make arrangements to come or participate in these classes. They are great opportunities to sing, learn, and discuss!

#### 11. Commitment Upon Accepting a Role

As part of accepting a role, you will be required to sign a contract for the relevant production. The contract will contain a detailed listing of potential call times and defines when the “red zone” begins and how many rehearsals are included in that

voice, physicality, and character. It is your responsibility to ensure that each rehearsal builds on the foundations of the one before, so that time can be spent on new discovery and exploration, rather than merely reviewing what you have already been given.

Opera Workshop scenes judged by the faculty to fall short of acceptable performance standards will not be performed.

## 8. Expectations: Rehearsal Dress & Deportment

Students should dress appropriately for rehearsal. This means wearing clothing that allows you to move freely and easily, without inappropriate exposure, and that you do not mind getting dirty from the floor. Bring character shoes and other clothing specifically related to your character (for example, long skirts for roles that call for them, pants for pants roles, etc.) when requested to do so.

Students are expected to have their scores present at all rehearsals, for making musical or staging notes, or recording changes in words, cuts, etc.

Please be quiet during rehearsals, particularly when large numbers of people are involved. It is very difficult to work when there is an excessive amount of noise.

If you are not immediately required at the staging, please remain in the immediate vicinity of the rehearsal, so that you may be summoned quickly if needed.

## 9. Grading Policy

In general, all grades for Opera Department activities will be calculated from two components. One component is an assessment from the teacher(s) of the class; this is generally based upon professionalism, rather than talent. The second component is a jury grade from other faculty attending the performance(s); this reflects the quality of the individual's performance in an absolute sense, without any knowledge of what may have happened "behind the scenes." The two grades will be communicated separately to the student, but will be averaged for submission to the Registrar.

October 13 must be in the office by noon on October 7 or they cannot and will not be considered. No release requests are accepted for "red zones" in a specific production schedule as described in the previous section.

It should be made very clear that the on-line forms will be the only way to submit any schedule-related information. Do not leave notes in the Opera Office or mention your conflict to a teacher or student worker and expect that it will be taken care of. It is your responsibility to use the channels of communication we have provided.

With the enormous numbers of projects rehearsing simultaneously, it is usually impossible to reschedule rehearsals after the fact, and we expect all students to be considerate of their colleagues who rely upon their contribution at ensemble rehearsals. It wastes everyone's time when people are not on time or do not show up at all.

## 5. Publication of the Weekly Schedule

The Opera Department publishes a weekly schedule, detailing production events and rehearsals for the coming week. It is developed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays for the following week and will be posted on the Opera Website and on the Opera Board outside the Opera Studio (LH114) on Thursdays.

The schedule posted on the Opera website can be manipulated to display only your personal rehearsals for the coming week. If you enter your name into the schedule box and then bookmark the page that comes up (something like: <http://peabodyopera.org/schedule/index.php?artist=yourname>), you will be able to access your personal schedule directly each time without going through the site; the scheduling program will automatically supply the latest version.

There are occasionally errors in the schedule, where people are double-scheduled, or a name is omitted by mistake. Should you find an error, please *notify the department assistant immediately* so that appropriate steps may be taken. This means you **must** read the schedule on Thursdays when it is distributed. No requests for changes will be honored after 10:00 AM on Friday following schedule distribution.

Sometimes, as a convenience to you and a guide for us, we will provide you with an **advance schedule** covering several weeks of a particular show. This is considered subject to change and will be marked as such. This means that even if you have, for example, a schedule listing all of your rehearsals for the final three weeks of rehearsal, you must *still* report any possible conflicts for times when you are not scheduled, because the progress of rehearsals may require that changes be made.

Ultimately, you are responsible for yourself. You are the one that is hurt the most by missing a rehearsal, and your absence, if unnecessary, shows great disrespect for your profession and colleagues. If you do not notify the scheduler of a conflict, it cannot be accommodated, so over- rather than under-notify.

## 6. Expectations: Punctuality and Accountability

Rehearsals and coachings will begin at the time announced. You are expected to arrive at rehearsals well in advance of the scheduled time, warmed up vocally and physically and ready to go at the start time.

Lateness to rehearsals will not be tolerated. It is an indication of lack of respect to your colleagues and to the music. This applies to coachings, stagings, classes, costume fittings, orchestra rehearsals, and any other related time commitment. Should you arrive late to rehearsal, an apology will be expected, both to your colleagues and to the faculty. Repeated tardiness will be reflected in your grade or in removal from your role assignment.

For those of you participating in the chorus program, it is understood by the Ensemble Office that you may leave 5 minutes prior to the end of the chorus rehearsal so that you may transit to an opera rehearsal that begins at 4pm. Please use this privilege only as necessary. Remember that the Ensemble office receives a copy of the weekly schedule, so do not attempt to abuse this agreement.

If you arrive more than fifteen minutes late to an individual coaching, the hour will be forfeited and will not be rescheduled, without exception.

Coachings cancelled less than 24 hours in advance due to any reason other than illness will not be rescheduled. Repeated cancellation will affect your grade for the production or class in question. Emergencies do arise, and it is the responsibility of each student to carry the appropriate phone numbers in order to notify the opera office, the faculty member, the student coach, or whomever is expecting you for a rehearsal during which you have an emergency and will be unavoidably delayed. The Opera Department number is **410-659-8100 ext.1255** and is equipped with an answering machine on the extension, but it is *best to contact your coach directly*, as the office is not staffed at all times. Individual numbers are available from the opera office; use them when to speak to specific staff members.

## 7. Expectations: Musical/Dramatic Preparation

It is the responsibility of each student to prepare music on his or her own. This includes learning notes and rhythm, knowing the meaning of the text without having to refer to the score, and doing research on the dramatic context of each piece of music. Individual coaching may be forfeited if any of the above expectations are not met.

For individual coachings of repertoire other than that currently being rehearsed for a Peabody production, the student is expected to provide an extra copy of music, appropriately taped together or bound, for the pianist.

The contract schedules will give deadlines for the memorization of music for all productions. If you are behind in your learning, it is your responsibility to do whatever extra preparation may be necessary to get the music memorized. *For students that do not meet the announced memorization deadline, the highest grade that can be earned is a B.*

While a stage director will usually give the blocking of a scene at its first rehearsal, he or she expects to work with artists who have already given some thought to the motivation of their characters and the dramatic possibilities open to them. It is your responsibility to keep an accurate record of everything that happens in rehearsals affecting your character. You are also expected to practice in between rehearsals, taking ownership of the directions you have been given, and working them into your